

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. METHOD AND SCOPE OF THE INQUIRY

The investigation of the Chiu Ta Factory workers was started in May 1926 and completed in the early part of July; that of the 50 Pacific Alkali Factory workers which immediately followed lasted three weeks. The latter investigation furnished supplementary material to the study of the Chiu Ta workers. Before the investigation proper began, a preliminary survey was conducted in three days, in order to orient the investigator in the new environment. Using this survey as a basis, three sets of schedules were then drawn up for the use of the investigation. The first set was in outline form, serving as a general survey of the factory in its salient features. The second set was intended for an intensive study of the resident workers, while the third was for the study of the families of the Chiu Ta workers living in Tangku. The schedules used in this inquiry for the study of the workers included mainly questions on the cost of living. While the social items were reduced to a minimum, particular emphasis was laid on details of income and expenditure.

The data of this investigation are derived mainly from four sources: (1) schedules of investigation, (2) records of the factory, (3) direct observation and (4) personal interviews. Data from the first two sources constitute the most important part of our material. Records supplied by the factory are undoubtedly reliable. As to the figures on the schedules, a reasonable degree of accuracy can be vouched for, as they have been verified by observation and study wherever possible. With regard to wages, the figures were checked by the factory records. Figures for expenses which appeared doubtful were checked either by re-examining the workers in question or through interviews with

FACTORY WORKERS IN TANGKU

- 12 their relatives or friends. It may be safely said that possible errors are thus reduced to a minimum.

There were 556 workers in the Chiu Ta Factory, and of this number, 420 were resident workers. Excluding the newcomers from whom it was impossible to obtain their income and expenditure for the last year, only 306 resident workers fell within the scope of our investigation. And from this number, 86 have been chosen and included in our sample. As a whole, the sample may be considered to reflect the general condition of the entire body of the Chiu Ta resident workers whose length of service was upwards of a year. As to the non-resident workers, 80 out of 136 families were chosen at random. But in the course of analysing these 80 schedules, only 61 families have been found serviceable for our purpose,

II. DIFFICULTIES OF THE INVESTIGATION

- 123 Explanation of Purpose.—In conducting a social investigation in China, it is necessary, first of all, to make known to the persons under investigation the purpose of the work and also the organization we represent, in order to avoid suspicion. To do this, however, is no easy task. First, the very title of our organization, "The Social Research Department of the China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture" is a long and unintelligible epithet to them. Terms like "Education and Culture" and "Social Research" have to be fully explained. When the meaning of the terms has been duly conveyed, they seriously questioned the motives of collecting informations which seem to infringe upon their privacy of life. They also doubted as to what good such an investigation would produce. All these and other related questions had to be answered to their satisfaction.

Having made clear the nature of the organization whence he came, the investigator next had to explain to them his working terms like "cost of living," "working conditions," "surplus and deficit," etc. which are usually mere jargons to the workers and must be interpreted to them in their own language. It should be